



## OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Marc Elrich  
County Executive

Tiffany Ward  
Director and Chief Equity Officer

### MEMORANDUM

May 2, 2023

To: Jennifer Bryant, Director  
Office of Management and Budget

From: Tiffany Ward, Director  
Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice 

Re: Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) Supplemental Appropriation (SA) #23-99  
Burtonsville Crossing Shopping Center (No. 362311)

- I. **FINDING:** The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) finds that Supplemental Appropriation #23-99 *Burtonsville Crossing Shopping Center (No. 362311)*, (\$5,000,000) advances racial equity and social justice, but the scale of likely impacts—based on available information—is limited given that they relate to the construction of a project developed and approved without an explicit racial equity analysis. However, given the demographic characteristics of where the Shopping Center is located, and what is known about the legacy of discriminatory policies, exclusionary zoning, and other land use controls in the County, it is likely that this project will help to redress historical and current racial inequities.
- II. **BACKGROUND:** The purpose of Supplemental Appropriation #23-99 Burtonsville Crossing Shopping Center (No. 362311), (\$5,000,000) is to allocate grants funded under Maryland Senate Bill 291 by the State of Maryland for “the acquisition, planning, design, construction, repair, renovation, reconstruction, site improvement, and capital equipping of the Burtonsville Crossing Shopping Center”<sup>1</sup> located 15179 Old Columbia Pike, Burtonsville, Montgomery County, Maryland 20866. In addition, the supplemental appropriation will cover any costs associated with extinguishing a lease restriction at the Burtonsville Crossing Shopping Center (Shopping Center).

The Shopping Center is located within the boundaries of the Burtonsville Crossroads Neighborhood Plan and has approximately 130,000 square feet of commercial uses located

Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) Supplemental Appropriation (SA) #23-99 Burtonsville Crossing Shopping Center (No. 362311)

May 2, 2023

Page 2 of 4

in a main retail strip center and three pad site buildings. The property also has 690 surface-level parking spaces. The history of the site's development dates to 1985<sup>2</sup>. Since the early 2000s, the Shopping Center and surrounding areas have experienced a great deal of change, including lease restrictions on and vacancy of the main anchor property, zoning changes, the adoption of the Burtonsville Crossroads Neighborhood Plan in December 2012, and the Maryland State designation as an Enterprise Zone<sup>3</sup>. According to the Justification Statement for Burtonsville Crossing Shopping Center Limited Major Site Plan Amendment No. 81985104A, the center has been in decline and largely vacant for the past several years<sup>4</sup>. The site plan amendment initiates revitalization of the Shopping Center, including:

- demolishing 7,600 square feet of existing retail uses and relocating that retail square footage into two new pad sites with DriveThrus;
- creating a "village center" by improving the visual appearance of the area;
- improvements to open space, gateway signage, pedestrian lighting, streetscape elements, and acquisition of long-term façade and commercial center signage easements;
- mitigating the impact of transportation improvement projects on businesses in the Burtonsville commercial area; and
- supporting existing small businesses, creating new opportunities for private investment.

Notably, in our review of the staff report associated with the Plan amendment, we did not find evidence of a racial equity analysis. It also appears that the plan amendment did not receive any written feedback from community members<sup>5</sup>. The overall extent of community engagement efforts related to the site redevelopment is unclear. In June 2019, Montgomery County Park and Planning held a series of events related to Burtonsville Placemaking, however, those engagements appeared focused on the vision and implementation of the Burtonsville Crossing Neighborhood Plan and not specifically redevelopment of the shopping center. In our research, we found the *Grow East County*<sup>6</sup> and *Better Burtonsville*<sup>7</sup> blogs which highlighted an initial community meeting in June 2018 to discuss the future of Burtonsville Crossing, however, it's unclear, based on available information, what form community engagement has taken since then and the extent to which the community's requests and concerns have been centered in the shopping center's redevelopment plans.

As of March 2023, construction is underway at the shopping center<sup>8</sup>; Sprouts Farmers Market will be the new anchor retail store, opening in the fall/winter of 2023<sup>9</sup>. EDENS, the site real estate developer, published a set of datapoints<sup>10</sup> about the population within a one, three, and five-mile radius of the shopping center<sup>11</sup>. In our research, we found that The Burtonsville Crossing Shopping Center is in the 7014.26 census tract. Here are the race and ethnicity demographics of census tract 7014.26:

Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) Supplemental Appropriation (SA) #23-99 Burtonsville Crossing Shopping Center (No. 362311)

May 2, 2023

Page 3 of 4

| <b>The Burtonsville Crossing Shopping Center: Census Tract 7014.26</b> |        |
|--|--------|
| Tract Population   | 5,398  |
| Tract Minority %   | 88.16% |
| Number of Families   | 1,554  |
| Number of Households   | 1,897  |
| Non-Hispanic White Population  | 639    |
| Tract Minority Population  | 4,759  |
| American Indian Population   | 14     |
| Asian/Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Population                             | 736    |
| Black Population   | 3,153  |
| Hispanic Population  | 626    |
| Other/Two or More Races Population                                     | 230    |

**Source:** Federal Financial Institution Examination Council. FFIEC. Address lookup: 15179 Old Columbia Pike, Burtonsville, Montgomery County, Maryland 20866

<https://geomap.ffiec.gov/ffiecgeomap/>

While the focus of this supplemental appropriation is to fund aspects of an existing site plan (supported by an existing neighborhood plan), neither of which included a racial equity analysis, there are racial disparities and economic inequities in the County—and likely in this particular neighborhood—that should be considered in future decision-making about this project site and Burtonsville more generally. These inequities and their relevance to economic development and planning are highlighted in the “Examining History (From Plan Draft)” section of the Racial Equity and Social Justice Review of Thrive 2050:

*“Even after the passage of the Fair Housing Act of 1968 and the Community Reinvestment Act of 1977 to end these practices, a development pattern of segregation continued. Injustices were evident in unfair banking and lending practices; federal immigration policies; unequal public investment in schools, parks, and other public facilities; and siting a disproportionately high number of undesirable uses, such as landfills, near communities of color. In Montgomery County, the legacy of such discriminatory policies and the exclusionary zoning and other land use controls led to neighborhoods defined by income, race, and housing types. As a result of these practices and other societal factors, significant quality of life gaps exists for various racial and ethnic groups in the county. To address segregation and economic inequality established in past zoning/land use planning, deliberate mechanisms need to be introduced to create racially and economically inclusive communities.”<sup>12</sup>*

Decisions about the types of businesses the shopping center attracts and supports, and quality (wages, benefits, scheduling, etc.) of jobs created and retained, policies governing the use of community spaces, and monitoring of both vision zero and climate goals will

Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) Supplemental Appropriation (SA) #23-99 Burtonsville  
Crossing Shopping Center (No. 362311)

May 2, 2023

Page 4 of 4

have a disproportionate impact on Black, Indigenous, and People of Color communities (BIPOC) who visit and live around the Shopping Center. This is because of the ways structural inequities have created barriers to business startup and growth, disparate access to living-wage and quality jobs (stemming from housing and education disparities), experiences of biased treatment in public spaces, disproportionate environmental harms, and disproportionate pedestrian and bike safety risks for BIPOC communities. Paying close attention to these inequities in future decisions related to the Shopping Center would not only benefit communities most burdened by racial disparities—in alignment with the RESJ Act—it would also create benefits for all Montgomery County residents. According to PolicyLink’s National Equity Atlas, eliminating the rent burden in 2019 could have added \$594 million in disposable income to renters’ spending power, and eliminating racial inequities in income that same year would have added \$127 Billion to the county’s GDP.

cc: David Dise, Director, Department of General Services  
Ken Hartman, Director, Strategic Partnerships, Office of the County Executive